

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0218

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PP

SUBJECT: THE PROCESS TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

1. AS THE DEPT AWARE, NUMEROUS DATES FOR PNG INDEPENDENCE HAVE BEEN SET AND THEN DISCARDED AS THEY PASS WITHOUT THE COMPLETION OF ESSENTIAL PRE-INDEPENDENCE TASKS BY THE PNG GOVERNMENT. THE CURRENT DATE INDICATED IS JUNE 28 AND WHILE THERE ARE INDICATIONS ALREADY THAT THIS DATE IS OPTOMISTIC, IT CANNOT BE TOTALLY DISCOUNTED. ISSUES THAT REMAIN TO BE RESOLVED BEFORE INDEPENDENCE ARE FORMIDABLE HOWEVER. IN APPROXIMATE ORDER THEY ARE (1) RESOLUTION OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ISSUE (2) DEBATE AND PASSAGE OF DRAFT CONSTITUTION BILL (3) DRAFTING, DEBATE AND PASSAGE OF ORGANIC LEGISLATION FLOWING FROM CONSTITUTION, (4) ELECTION OF HEAD OF STATE, (5) SETTING OF DATE OF INDEPENDENCE BY HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

2. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT: IT APPEARS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER AS AMENDED BY UNITED PARTY AND NATIONAL PRESSURE GROUP SUGGESTION WILL BE PASSED MARCH 11 OR 12 BY THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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3. DRAFT CONSTITUTION BILL: IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE DRAFT

CONSTITUTION BILL WILL BE TABLED ON MARCH 12 SO THAT THE MEMBERS MAY TAKE IT TO THEIR DISTRICTS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION WHEN THE HOUSE RISES ON THE 12TH OR 13TH. THE GOVERNMENT DESIRES TO HAVE THE HOUSE FORM ITSELF INTO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN APRIL TO DEBATE THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION BILL. AT UNITED PARTY INSISTENCE IT APPEARS THAT THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION BILL WILL HAVE TO BE CONSIDERABLY REVISED TO MORE ACCURATELY REFLECT THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY DURING THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE. UNITED PARTY LEADERSHIP DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY SHOULD MEET IN APRIL AND HAS FORMALLY INFORMED THE CHIEF MINISTER OF ITS VIEWS. THIS COULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE DELAY IN PROCESS TOWARD INDEPENDENCE. PRESUMABLY CRASH DRAFTING EFFORT OVER NEXT TWO WEEKS COULD RESOLVE ISSUES IN MANNER ACCEPTABLE TO UNITED PARTY, AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT GOVERNMENT IS BRINGING IN LEGISLATIVE DRAFTSMAN FROM AUSTRALIA FOR THIS PURPOSE. IF THIS DONE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY COULD STILL BE HELD IN APRIL.

4. ORGANIC LEGISLATION: THERE HAS BEEN ALMOST NO MENTION OF ORGANIC LEGISLATION DURING THIS SESSION OF THE HOUSE. ALTHOUGH SOMARE IS COMMITTED TO THE PASSAGE OF ORGANIC LEGISLATION PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE WE WERE INFORMED SOME MONTHS AGO THAT IT WAS ALL PREPARED, BUT COPIES HAVE NOT BEEN MADE AVAILABLE, AND IT IS MORE THAN POSSIBLE THAT THIS ANTICIPATED MASS OF ESSENTIAL LEGISLATION WILL NOT BE CLEARED THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS UNTIL THE SUMMER MONTHS. IT WOULD BE AN EXCEPTIONAL TOUR DE FORCE FOR SOMARE TO GET IT PUSHED THROUGH THE APRIL SESSION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME OBTAINING APPROVAL OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL BILL.

5. ELECTION OF HEAD OF STATE: CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION EXISTS RE CANDIDATES FOR HEAD OF STATE, WITH SIR MAORI KIKI AND DR. JOHN GUISE, MENTIONED AS PRIME CHOICES. IT IS RUMORED THAT KIKI IS WORN FROM HIS JOINT TASKS AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE, TRADE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS, FEELS ISOLATED FROM HIS ELECTORATE, AND DESIRES THE JOB OF HEAD OF STATE. DR. GUISE, LONG CONSIDERED THE LOGICAL CHOICE, IS ALLEGEDLY CONSIDERED BY THE MINISTRY TO BE TOO AMBITIOUS, TO AUTHORITARIAN, AND NOT A RELIABLE SOMARE SUPPORTER. IN A STATE WITH WEAK INSTITUTIONS THERE IS RELUCTANCE TO PLACE GUISE IN A POSITION WHERE HE COULD

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CHALLENGE THE CHIEF MINISTER. IN ADDITION THERE MAY BE A RESTRUCTURING OF THE CABINET (SEE SEPTTEL) AND OTHER AS YET UNFORESEEN ISSUES MAY IMPACT ON THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY WHICH WOULD FURTHER DELAY THE PROCESS TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE. STILL, SHOULD A SERIES OF MELANESIAN COMPROMISES BE REACHED, THESE AND OTHER ISSUES COULD BE RESOLVED AND SOMARE'S SCHEDULE FALL NEATLY INTO PLACE.

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